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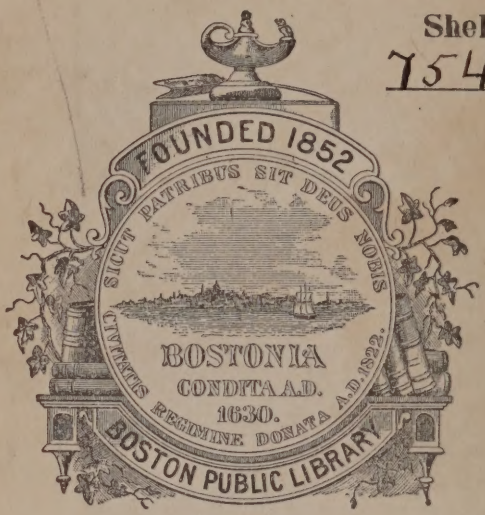

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ARE THE BAPTISTS BAPTISTS?

A STUDY IN

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COMPARATIVE CHURCH POLITY.

BY

KAGO PULSIDORE.

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ARE THE BAPTISTS BAPTISTS?

A CERTAIN sect of Christendom, numbering some three million adherents, plants itself squarely on the New Testament as the sole rule of faith and practice. No other authority is binding on the churches, and consequently there are no prescribed formulas, creeds, liturgies, — no complicated mechanisms or official gradations, save such as clearly come from the one source of knowledge and authority. The resultant of this principle, working through the long centuries, is the Baptist denomination, one of the largest, simplest, and most effective of the Protestant communions.

Practice, in the sense used above, means either the walk and conversation of the individual disciple, — the practice of private Christianity; or Church Polity, — the practice of corporate Christianity. We are here concerned with this latter thought: "The New Testament is the solitary source of information and law concerning the organized life of the Christian community." Baptist Church Polity, therefore, claims to be an exact reproduction of the scheme of ecclesiastical administration set forth in the New Testament. Stated in

its simplest form, the rule is that everything in the organic life of the Church, — its conduct, creed, ordinances, and discipline is to follow invariably the model of the Apostolic age. The Baptists stand — and they alone stand — for the revelation of Church Polity, as opposed to the evolution of Church Polity.

In popular thinking, this sect is supposed to exist for the enforcement of baptism by immersion, and the restriction of the communion to those so baptized. But those better acquainted with the denominational theory know that these items are mere incidentals, arising out of the fundamental idea. The basal postulate is that everything is to be done as near like the model as it is possible to do it. This general principle controls all particulars. Immersion is insisted upon, because, by the consensus of all scholars of weight, it is pronounced to be the mode practiced by Christ and His Apostles. One rank only is allowed in the ministry, because the New Testament is believed to show but one. "Close Communion" is simply a side-issue of the great baptismal controversy. And the general constitution of Baptist Churches is the simple rule that in all questions affecting doctrine or conduct, private or corporate, the ultimate appeal is to the New Testament as the sole norm of faith and practice.

Extremes strangely meet — sometimes. For this position, so far as it goes, is identical with that of the Roman Catholic Church. "There is a deposit of faith." Only this deposit is in the letter of the Book

rather than in the hands of the clergy. This fixed stock of information is conceived to be the sole material out of which a Church Polity may be built. It may not be added to or departed from. At least all essential features must be retained, or the organization ceases to be a Christian Church. For in a polity by revelation, the principles are reduced to mere questions of fact. In reality there is but one principle, which is stated interrogatively. "What was the constitution and character of the primitive ecclesia?" Once formulated, the answer to this inquiry becomes the inviolable law for the organization and process of the Church.

On this ground the claim is made that other denominations of Christendom, since they openly violate the principle, are not properly constituted.

Without questioning the status of the sects that hold and illustrate the evolution of Church Polity, it is safe to say that any institution that fails literally to copy the New-Testament model is not a Baptist Church.

In proposing to examine the standing of the denomination with reference to its own rubric of Church Polity, two admissions ought to be made.

1. There is no scheme of ecclesiastical administration more noble, spiritual, and at the same time more safe and effective, than that of the first Christian century. History does not contain a lovelier picture than those early gatherings of the disciples, whose pervading spirit was love and whose prevailing characteristic

was simplicity. Coarse ambition had not yet created offices for its own satisfaction. Intolerance had not rent the body of Christ into a hundred fragments. Complicated machinery had not usurped the spontaneity of life. Elaborate rituals had not smothered the free uprising of the soul to God. "All things were common." Every disciple stood on a level of absolute equality with every other disciple in respect to the privileges of heavenly grace. Brotherhood was the ruling passion. Sweet charity filled every heart. Each esteemed other better than himself. Diversities of gifts there were; but they were the natural diversities which each believer was at liberty to use according to his ability, for the glory of God and the saving of men. And as to the official gradations they were the simple divisions of labor, inevitable in any organism. Alas! that the evolution of Church Polity ever began.

2. Of all modern sects, it must be justly said the Baptists most nearly resemble the original type. They vary least, if they vary at all.

It is to be borne in mind, however, that the outward likeness may remain perfect long after the inward or spiritual similitude, wherein is the real resemblance, has totally disappeared. Just as the works of a clock may be removed, and the gear of an infernal machine put in its place. But the question of divergence between ancient and modern Christianity on the spiritual side must be passed without examination. The present inquiry relates to the body, not the soul. Is the physi-

cal construction of the Baptist Church identical with that of the primitive ecclesia? The norm itself forbids any modifications. Have changes taken place?

No surprise need be excited by the discovery of marked discrepancies. For it is a law of life that all organisms undergo inevitable metamorphoses through those subtle differentiations that no rules can prevent. Environment, expansion, and a thousand exigencies shift the habit of a community so imperceptibly, that while holding stoutly to its rule of life, it often gets very far from that rule. Especially is this likely to be the case when one tenet or function comes to be regarded as superlatively important. Intense concentration on one particular is apt to be attended by corresponding negligence of others. Since this law of modification is invincible in all forms of life, a fair critique should concern itself only with the constitutional and indispensable features of the case. It avails little to point out minor differences. A bird is a bird, though its feet become webbed so that it can swim, and its wings are dwarfed so as to be practically useless for flight. And a whale, in spite of appearances, is not a fish. To be sure, this concession gives considerable more leeway than the Baptist postulate itself intends to grant. And if any malign motive had brought this paper to light, a plea of no little cogency could be entered on particular rather than essential grounds. A system of administration may be modified by the decadence of some original part, or by the accretion

of a new element. It will be valid argument against a polity, claiming to be given by revelation, to show that it differs from the pattern in either way. With reference to our inquiry quite a list of specifications might be set in one category or the other: such as the "Hand of Fellowship," a modern innovation which has attained in fact, though not in name, to the dignity of a third ordinance; or the participation of the laity in ecclesiastical legislation, of which there are uncertain traces; pastoral dictation, or the casting of lots being the usual if not the invariable solvent; or the ordination of ministers, which appears to have been very different from the modern affair; or the observance of the "Lord's Day," the historical consideration of which might throw some light on our Sunday question; or the "Agape," which has entirely disappeared from the denominational practice; or the "Lord's Supper," always the principal, and often the only public service of each Sabbath, which is now become a mere tail-piece, sandwiched in between the other Sunday engagements, wherever it will go, and only once a month at that. But while these matters would enter into the account of a strict parity between the ancient and the modern ecclesia, they do not affect the constitution of the church. To prove a radical divergence, it is necessary to compare those clear positions of the Primitive Polity that may fairly be reckoned as the foundation-stones. That some of these have been moved far out of place it will now be our endeavor to show.

I. THE CHURCH. — In the Apostolic age, and for five hundred years afterward, it was the unvarying custom to have but one church in a town or city. It was constituted by organizing, in simple fashion, the whole Christian community into one body. Its membership consisted of the entire Christian population of the place. It had many pastors, each performing the work he could do best, and probably many preaching stations, located where they were needed. This single organization planned and executed all the religious work of that region, included the total discipleship of that vicinity, and was the church of that given locality.

The proof of these statements need not be detailed here. Students of Church History know them to be the simple truth. Those unacquainted with the records will be convinced by examining any text-book relating to the first or second century. In Jerusalem, soon after the famous Pentecost, the number of men was about five thousand, and the Lord was adding to the Church daily such as were being saved. A certain census taken in Rome, reveals the fact that there were fifty-six thousand members in the single church in that city. Antioch had at one time a population of over two hundred thousand souls, one-half of whom were Christians. Chrysostom was a pastor of the church which included this vast number of disciples in its fold. In the Scriptures we read of the church in Corinth, in Ephesus, in Thyatira, but never of the

churches in those or any other city. These illustrations show the prevailing status in the ages to which appeal is made.

The following definition seems to be valid: The New-Testament Church was the whole community of Christian believers, organized into one body for the carrying on of Christian work and edification.

To correspond, the definition of the nineteenth century Church should be, — the whole community of Christian believers in a given locality, organized into one body for the carrying on of Christian work and edification.

But since in these democratic times it is not possible for one sect to coerce all others into its fold, the definition may be modified to read: A Baptist church is the entire company of those who belong to that denomination in a given locality, organized into one body for the carrying on of Christian work and edification.

The gulf between such an institution and the denominational status in any large place is too wide for discussion. Take, for example, the city of Boston. Within the limits of this metropolis there are twenty-nine Baptist churches, reporting a total membership of 10,707, about one-tenth the size of the one church at Antioch when Chrysostom was its pastor. These twenty-nine bodies are absolutely independent of each other. Each is a republic in the most despotic sense. Each chooses its own officers, fills its own treasury, expends its own income, plants its meeting-house wher-

ever it pleases, plans and executes its operations with total unconcern for all the rest, and feels responsible to nobody, — sometimes it would seem not even to God. It is preposterous to say that twenty-nine churches are the same as one, or that the condition of denominational affairs in Boston is identical with the ecclesiastical status of the Apostolic age.

This wholesale panchotomy is due to the current definition of the Church. In treatises on Church Polity by Baptist authors, it is described as "any number of baptized believers, associated together for the worship of God, the maintenance of the truth, and the observance of the Gospel ordinances." Against this definition it may be confidently urged, that though it fairly represents the modern ecclesia it does not define the ancient. That was the whole number of baptized believers associated together for the ends above named. And for several centuries of Christian history no instance is reported where less than the whole number were ever called a church; while such a situation as now exists in Boston, or any large town, was utterly unknown. (See note, page 30.)

In one particular, at least, that may be justly reckoned fundamental, the Baptist denomination has openly violated its own law of Church Polity, and clearly departed from the practice of Apostolic times.

II. Baptism. — In the early Church baptism was the means and mode by which the convert made his first declaration of faith in Christ. It was administered at

once to all applicants, and thus became the initial step, the first formal act of the Christian life.

It would seem the height of presumption to charge the Baptists with disloyality to the ordinance for whose literal observance they have stood so rigidly. But it is easily possible to retain the correct form of a ceremony after its significance and purpose are entirely changed. No party in Christendom uses the rite with the design and meaning it originally had. A review of the evidence in the Scriptures shows that in no case was any delay allowed between the profession and the administration of the rite. For baptism was the profession! The only instance of a baptism deferred some days was that of Saul of Tarsus. But here the delay was clearly due to physical incapacity. For no sooner had he recovered his sight, than without waiting to break his three days' fast even, he was buried in baptism with the Christ whom once he persecuted. Three thousand persons, pricked in the heart on the day of Pentecost, were that same day baptized. The Ethiopian treasurer, convinced by Philip's exposition of the Scriptures, alighted from his chariot and was baptized. A Roman jailer, converted from heathenism in the dead of night, was that same night baptized. So everywhere. There is a promptness and dispatch about it, which demonstrates that in the minds of the early administrators, the ordinance occupied a different place, and served another purpose from that we now give it. Its evident function was to announce

the candidate as a disciple of Christ. It was the first proclamation of the new life, and necessarily preceded all else. It stood emphatically at the head, and would have lost much of its savor (if not all) by transference to a later stage.

In our day, baptism almost never follows immediately upon conversion. A delay of weeks, often of months, is insisted upon as a term of probation. Meanwhile the convert has "risen for prayers," has served his time on the anxious-seat, has confessed his Lord in public meetings again and again, and has been recognized as a professed disciple by all who know him. That which baptism was designed to declare has been declared times without number already. An *ex post facto* character is thus imposed on the ceremony, reducing it to the level of mere ritual. It cannot proclaim what is already perfectly known. If the candidate comes from another denomination, the rite is usually administered again. He may have been a church member, or even a pastor, of twenty years' standing, recognized and revered as such by the whole community. For the sake of formal correctness, the mere masque of a rite, out of which life and meaning long ago departed, is performed again. In its Scriptural conception baptism is related to the Christian life as the marriage ceremony is to the connubial estate. There is but one place for it, and that is at the beginning. A parallel defalcation would be to defer the wedding till the parties had lived together some months

as man and wife. The distinction between the ancient and the modern usage seems to be that then baptism was the convert's confession of his conversion to Christ, and now it is the Church's endorsement of that confession. This change has come about through a misconception of the function of baptism, and through an unsuspected ceremonialism that insists on a rite for its own sake, rather than for what it means, and through the gradual substitution of other acts of confession. Clearly, even in Baptist churches, baptism does not occupy the place or express the meaning it had in the Primitive Polity.

III. STRUCTURE. — The New-Testament Church was a solid homogeneous body, organized within rather than without. The various functions of its life were discharged directly, and without the aid of secondary societies or sub-organisms.

Another instance of divergence from the pattern is found in the structure of the individual church. We have seen how, in the communal sense, the primary organization has been rent asunder so that the Church in the city of Boston becomes twenty-nine isolated societies. The process of disintegration goes deeper still. Each separate section is redivided into numerous fragments. It would be nearer the truth to say that the Church has disappeared, and in its place a congeries of petty societies has arisen. First, there is the ecclesiastical corpus still called "the Church;" the desiccated and limbless trunk of the full-armed institution

that once bore the name. Next, the Society, to which is generally intrusted the management of business concerns. After this the Sunday School. Then the Society of Christian Endeavor; followed by the Ladies' Circle; and so on to the end of the list. The Church has ceased to be an individual and become a herd. Instead of a central luminary, filling ethical space with its potent vitality, we find a solar system revolving round a lost centre. The aggregation which takes the place and does the work of the dismembered ecclesia is composed of a body, called the Church, plus the Society, plus the Sunday School, plus the Society of Christian Endeavor, plus the Ladies' Circle, plus the King's Daughters, plus the Band of Hope, plus the Mission Band, plus the Ladies' Missionary Circle, and so on and so forth, *ad libitum*, *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseum*. It is quite useless to argue that these minor satellites are only modes of Church life. The truth is, that they are as independent of the parent stem, and of each other, as are the fractions into which the original Christian community has resolved itself. Each has its officers, its constitution, its specific ends, and its peculiar lines of operation. And each, were all the rest blotted out of existence, could live on as comfortably as before. Take, for example, the Society of Christian Endeavor, the latest but most highly organized comer into this field. It has a full board of officers of its own, its treasury and working rules, together with every needed equipment. The pastor, as such,

has no connection with it. The deacons, as such, are not recognized by it. The church, as such, has no voice in its affairs, and is related only as a residuary legatee of whatever good it may chance to accumulate.

The natural history of these organisms is highly interesting. Certain low grades of animal nature propagate their species by budding or division. Around the middle of the worm-like body a stricture forms. This band, by slow contraction, gradually cuts the animal in two, and each part becomes a perfect specimen of its kind. Or, a knob appears on one side which elongates into a full-grown creature, and breaks off from the parent stock. In the early stages of germination or fission, it is impossible to tell whether there are two individuals or one. Later, it becomes evident that the two are bound together like the Siamese Twins. Finally, the nexus is severed entirely. Two perfect animals result.

These various societies which cluster still about the parent stock are simple functions of the Church life, which, through a biological process akin to fission, have cut loose from the main organism and set themselves up in independent circumstances. Some have broken the connection entirely and meet their progenitor as equal. Others are still held by a ligament, a long and slender one sometimes. But all cover territory and do work that, in the beginning, was committed to the Church. The Young Men's Christian Association, for instance, discharges a part of the missionary or evangelistic

function of the Church. The White and Red Cross Armies exist for the inculcation of social and personal purity. One is moved to inquire what the Church of Christ is for, if the inculcation of those virtues be not one immediate end of its being. Numerous temperance organizations represent elements of Christian work which have developed into self-sustaining bodies. In the nearer circle, the Sunday School is the teaching function; the Society is the business function; the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor is the training function. It seems to be a characteristic of this generation to set up special machinery whenever special work is to be done. But it is altogether a modern innovation. Nothing of the sort appears in Apostolic history. Then the Church was a compact organism, exercising all its normal functions, — preaching, teaching, evangelizing, training without foreign aid, — and covering fully all the ground now held by a dozen or twenty subordinate corporations.

Here is a distinction between the ancient ecclesia and its modern antitype well worth considering. The advocates of Church Polity, by revelation, will find it difficult, to say the least, to show anything in the revelation that resembles the present ramiform status.

Baptist writers have described, in semi-humorous fashion, the profound astonishment that would fill the breast of Paul on visiting a ritualistic or Roman-Catholic service. But would not equal amazement seize the great Apostle, on being told that the present state of

the Baptist community in Boston, dissected into twenty-nine competitive, not to say antagonistic fractions, and each part disintegrated again into a dozen more or less distinct segments, was the identical condition of things he himself had intended to institute?

To a religious party, claiming to derive its faith and practice from the primal source alone, all questions are either historical or exegetical. Expediency or feasibility do not enter into the account. The single question is: "What are the facts, with reference to the constitution and custom of the original Church?" Once ascertained, those facts become law. Consistency demands exact conformity. This, at least, in all essential structural elements. Whether or not modern improvements better suited to the exigencies of the nineteenth century could be devised,—whether or not some other method would be more effective or safe,—it is not permissible to discuss. For the moment a modern improvement is deliberately substituted for a constitutional feature, that moment does the denomination abandon its basal postulate. Church Polity, by revelation, surrenders to Church Polity by evolution, and the Baptists cease to be Baptists.

It is irrelevant, therefore, to argue the inferiority or inexpediency of the modern as contrasted with the ancient scheme. Because in a polity given by revelation the terms are not relative but identical. The natural law of an organism, constructed on that principle, is "Conformity to Type." "See that thou make

all things according to the pattern showed thee in the Mount."

But this critique is written in heartiest sympathy with the fortunes of the denomination to which it relates, and with most loyal endorsement of its fundamental principles. The writer believes that the polity of the first century is efficient and sufficient unto all the needs of the nineteenth. He holds, further, that every departure from the primitive form has invariably resulted in serious evils; and that the wisest course for the Baptists, and for all, would be to return at once to the faith and practice of the Apostolic age. Moreover, the sole end in view is to set people to thinking; and, if possible, to bring the denomination back again to its original rule of ecclesiastical administration.

It may assist the mental activities of some to perceive the immense superiority of the Primitive Polity. In this commercial age of labor-saving devices the plan that is most effective and least expensive, which economizes its power and specializes its resources, is sure to find the widest favor. The following items are subjoined, not as constitutional arguments, but as inducements of a somewhat material sort, to the re-adoption of the polity which Christ and His Apostles actually did ordain. They will appeal to some minds as no other arguments can.

The unfortunate consequences which result from a degradation of Church Polity from its original standard may be grouped under one general caption, entitled—

The Waste of Power.

The early Church was remarkable for its compactness and economy. Its modern representative is equally notable for reckless prodigality, whereby many churches are brought to beggary and swine-feeding. A few specifications will be interesting.

Money.

The disruption of the one communal Church into several independent parts involves an immense financial outlay. Each must have its house of worship, costing several thousand dollars; its pastor, sexton, and choir, with salaries aggregating several thousands more; its special furnishings, and current expenses, swelling the total still higher. And inasmuch as these subdivisions usually arise by colonizing or quarrelling, the centres of operation are apt to be located by whim or malice aforethought as often as by generous consideration of the good of the cause. All of which works great detriment to the Kingdom, since not infrequently several sets of expenses accrue where only one is demanded. The result is, that Baptist churches everywhere are in a state of chronic poverty, and very few can make the current income cover the current expenditure. Whenever that is achieved, it is usually accomplished by reducing the current expenses to the lowest terms at which existence can be maintained. Or, what is the same thing, by narrowing the field of its operations and leaving most of its work undone. And since

each church is self-governed, it must be also self-supporting or become an object of charity. This brings the sorest pressure where it is least able to be borne, — on the newer and smaller bodies, — whose members are few, and whose resources are meagre.

It is plain that the Apostolic scheme had great economic advantages over the present system. Because its expenditures were regulated by the finest regard for the conservation of energy, and there was no waste. It is risking little to affirm that the churches of any district, reorganized on this basis, would compass twice the work at one-half the cost. The financial situation would be greatly relieved, probably entirely reversed.

Energy.

This leads directly to the consideration of another point, — namely, the Conservation of Energy. A large part of the effort of the church, — its time, strength, endeavor, — is consumed in futile attempts to make up the monetary deficit. Fairs, suppers, and amateur spectaculars absorb the spiritual as well as the physical activity of the disciples. The Church descends from its high office to go into the restaurant business, or to rival the dry-goods trade, or to compete with cheap theatricals. With a zeal often worthy of a better cause, the members toil for a good part of the year to accumulate a few hundred dollars in spurious ways, most of which must necessarily come out of their own pockets. Worst of all, the church poses before

the community as an object of charity. Money and materials are solicited indiscriminately, and the public is urged to buy what it does not want, at extortionate prices, to help the cause. And the Lord, whose is the earth and the fulness thereof, beholds His Church posturing in the garb of a beggar before the world that rejected Him. Meanwhile, the normal functions of Church life are disordered, and the spiritual service suffers sad neglect. What pastor does not know the secularizing influence of all these things, or dread the weeks that precede and follow the annual Church Fair?

This pressure for money is responsible for much of the sensational preaching and stage performance that now usurps the place of Christian worship. Pulpit Committees, searching for an under-shepherd are apt to inquire: "If we take this man as our pastor, will his preaching rent these pews?" Having accepted the situation with that understanding, the preacher feels bound to see the pews rented, and thus relieve the straitened treasury. He is pushed into that style of pulpit oratory that draws well. In these degenerate days, buffoonery, roaring rhetoric, windy declamation, elocutionary gymnastics, and bathos draw rather better than anything else. Even these may be forgiven were the motive not so mean.

It is responsible also for the system of pew-rents whereby the rich and the poor do not meet together and the Lord is not the Maker of them all, and of

account of which, it is becoming increasingly diffcult for the masses to believe that the Church has any interest in them beyond their cash value as potential subscribers. It is chargeable, also, with much of the rivalry, jealousy, and alienation that exists between sister churches located too near each other, each of which is trying to distance the other in numbers and general success. Small wonder that the world is being converted so slowly! And when we consider that all these gross defects would be obliterated by a re-adoption of the original form, it seems criminal folly not to do it.

Church Extension.

The haphazard fashion in which Baptist churches come into being has already been noticed. Most of them are founded in one of two ways. In rare instances a detachment is sent out, with the maternal blessing, to constitute a new body. More commonly the members fall to quarrelling among themselves, generally over a matter of pitiably small importance. No class of people on the face of the globe will fight so savagely, when once they get at it, as the members of an evangelical church. After awhile these disciples, who love the same Lord, and have consecrated themselves to the same holy service, and who must associate together forever in the same heaven bye and bye, decide that they cannot live any longer under one roof. The minority goes out. The temper in which they depart is not wholly favorable to loving consideration

of the rights and welfare of the mother church. Sometimes it is to be feared there is vigorous consideration of exactly the opposite sort. So that it is not impossible to find two churches on the same field, planning their enterprises with ingenious reference to impeding each other's work, and planting their meeting-houses so near together that if their eaves touched, the mutual damage would not be greater. The fight goes on for years. Acrimony, antagonism, weakness, and scandal afflict the community. The Kingdom of Heaven is dishonored, and the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, and worst of all, the perishing world goes right on with its perishing.

A certain New-England city has a population of twenty thousand souls. Six thousand are Roman Catholics. The remaining fourteen thousand are distributed unevenly among sixteen Protestant parishes. In this small town there are four Baptist churches. One of them claims, on cogent grounds, the honor of being the oldest Baptist church in America. The total Baptist membership is about nine hundred. Each owes its existence to a bitter feud, the blighting shadow of which remains to this day. These four churches in a Protestant constituency of fourteen thousand, with an average membership of two hundred and twenty-five, are situated in such proximity, that a marksman, standing in the tower of one of them, could easily hit every other Baptist church in town with a shot-gun of ordinary carrying power. The case is not

exceptional, save in degree. Instances in kind can be found in every State. And generally the rival bodies have more to fear from each other than from all other detrimental influences combined.

It goes without saying that under the Apostolic regime such a condition would not be possible. The one organization would locate its centres of operation when and where they were called for, would furnish each station with the best equipment, would put its greatest preachers in the neediest places, and conduct its administration on the most scientific principles of economy. All of which is forcefully illustrated by the valuable work now being done by certain Church Extension Societies, which have gotten control of the business in a few cities like Baltimore and Minneapolis.

The Pastorate.

The Apostolic Church, having many pastors, was able to set for each the task he could do best. Then, as now, there were diversities of gifts. The one Spirit provided different endowments. He gave some pastors, and some teachers, and some evangelists. And since every worker was assigned to that for which he was especially fitted, the whole was achieved with an economy and effectiveness never since attained. But now-a-days the numerous churches have one pastor each, who perforce exercises all the gifts. He is preacher, teacher, evangelist, prophet, and what not. Special qualifications, for some particular form of Christian

work, he may possess in a high degree. But he may not devote himself to that, lest the other parts suffer. And since the exigencies of the situation consume most of their service in tasks for which they have small aptitude, a large half of pastoral work is poorly done, while considerable is not done at all. An element of economy in large manufacturing establishments, consists in putting each operative at the job best suited to him, or in training the workman to do one thing till his skill is brought to a high degree of perfection. That is like the early Church. It would be the height of industrial folly to divide the mill into numerous small rooms, each equipped with one of every kind of machinery used in the business, and, putting one man in charge, expect him to operate them all successfully at the same time. That is like the modern Church. All men are specialists. Some one thing they can do better than they can do anything else. The wisest working arrangements are those which allot "to every man according to his several ability." One sign of the divine origin of the Church lies in the fact, when she came fresh from the hand of her Maker, she was organized on the most scientific principles of industrial economy.

Candidating.

In a dissertation of this sort it is neither possible nor desirable to inspect every detail. The object in view is to provoke thought and stimulate inquiry rather than to explore the whole range of the subject. The

final item to be treated under this general caption is the arrangement for pastoral supply. A vivid imagination could hardly invent a worse scheme than the system of candidating now in vogue. A church finds itself without a head, and begins to cast about for a suitable person to fill the vacancy. Immediately a deluge of letters from applicants, or their interested friends, pours in upon the Pulpit Committee. A procession of candidates files across the platform, parading as they go their most captivating qualifications. Sunday after Sunday strangers stand in the pulpit and are inspected by the congregation, very much as one watches the exercise of a horse he thinks of buying. The worship of God becomes secondary to the getting of a minister. For months the wretched performance goes on. Three of the largest suburban churches, near Boston, have been subsisting on candidates for over a year. Baptist audiences are fastidious. Nothing short of the best gifts will satisfy them. At length, driven by the feeling that something must be done, a choice is made. In nine cases out of ten, the successful competitor is just as good as a dozen others who have contended with him and no better. Meanwhile the eleven unsuccessfuls are "walking about Zion," in search of fresh fields and pastures new. During the candidating period the work of the church comes almost to a stand-still. The time thus spent is nearly a dead loss, so far as growth and the leavening of the community are concerned. Usually nothing is attempted.

Revivals are not expected. Increase is not given. Everything waits for the coming man. When we consider the amount of this business that is going on in every State, the total loss to the Kingdom of Heaven will appear by no means insignificant. Nor are the disadvantages of the system less painful to the clergymen themselves. To say nothing of the humiliation, which every man of delicacy and refinement must feel at putting himself on exhibition before a company of strangers, who are there to see if he will do for them, there is the grave consideration of the sudden stoppage of the means of subsistence and the more serious interruption of his life-work. Leaving one charge, he is liable to three, six, or even twelve months of candidating, before he can obtain another settlement. Betimes himself and family are without local habitation, or visible means of support, and, worst of all, he is debarred from the work to which his life is consecrated. As a result, the Baptist denomination presents, in a degree unrivalled by any other sect, the spectacle of a large number of churches without ministers, and a large number of ministers without churches.

In the Apostolic administration, since each community was provided with several pastors, the coming or going of one could make no serious break in the steadfast life of the Church. Just how the supply of pastors was provided for is not plain. But certainly, under an arrangement of that sort, no such deplorable situations as now afflict the Baptist Zion could possibly occur.

It is needless to multiply illustrations. Hardly an item can be mentioned in the contrast between the old and new polity, that does not make conspicuously to the advantage of the former.

Two cogent arguments,—jewelled consistency on the one hand, and economic effectiveness on the other,—appeal to Baptist loyality and good sense.

The author is well acquainted with the plea by which variations are palliated. Minor and non-essential details, it is said, are wisely left to the discretion of the church. Concerning this allegation three particulars are to be noticed: (1) It reduces Church Polity to a matter of opinion. Who is to decide what things are minor and non-essential? For instance, the question whether or not the form of the rite is essential, constitutes the very nib of the Baptismal controversy. (2) It contradicts the central principle of Baptist Church Polity, which is, that everything is to be done as near like the model as it is possible to do it. The sole argument for Independency against Episcopacy is the historic fact that the churches mentioned in the New Testament were independent of each other. (3) If it be allowed to stand as a corollary, giving pliancy to the main theorem, its force must never go so far as to affect the question of identity. Our contention is that the Baptist Church of the nineteenth century is not the same thing as its alleged prototype of the first. While contending zealously against the evolutionary theory of ecclesiastical government, it has itself undergone a

process of evolution, until through slow differentiation it has become structurally diverse from its original. What answer is to meet this claim? If it cannot be gainsaid, then the denomination confronts the dilemma, — one horn of which is thorough reconstruction on the lines of its professed model, — and the other, pusillanimous surrender to Church Polity by evolution.

In sending this essay out into the field of religious thought, the author feels no concern for its fate. If it speaks the truth, that truth will take care of itself. And if it cannot commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, by the manifestation of the truth, it will soon be overthrown; the sooner the better.

NOTE TO PAGE 11. — Exception might be taken to the statement that a smaller number than the entire company of the disciples were ever called a church, on the ground of Rom. xvi. 5 (cf. Col. iv. 15, and Phil. ver. 2). The commentators are agreed that the phrase, "the Church which is in their house," means one of three things, though they are sadly divided as to which it means. 1. The church, in the plenary sense, which, having no meeting-house, held its services in the home of some prominent member. 2. The family or household of the brother named. 3. A portion of the church smaller than the whole, which was accustomed to meet at this place for worship. My own belief is, that these are instances of the vulgar use of the word. In common parlance, ecclesia meant an assembly or gathering of any sort. So it is freely employed in classical Greek, and once at least in the New Testament. (vid. Acts xix. 41.) The church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila designates, probably without regard to numbers, a gathering of disciples which met there for religious purposes. The New-Testament writers show little disposition to restrict themselves to technical meanings. But the interpretation of these obscure texts, whatever it may be, can do nothing against the universally conceded fact, that whenever the church is spoken of for organized or governmental purposes, the whole Christian community is meant. There was but one organization in a given city. If a smaller company of believers is called a church, it is by a relapse into the untechnical usage of the word.